

PODIUM PRESENTATION

PALEOPATHOLOGICAL STUDIES OF PRE-COLUMBIAN POPULATIONS FROM NORTHWESTERN ARGENTINA

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Studies in Paleopathology have significantly contributed to the understanding of the ancient ways of life of the human groups that inhabited the Americas in times prior to the arrival of Europeans. The prevalence of pathological conditions in pre-Columbian populations is vital in anthropological studies, since they permit the reconstruction of social behavior of ancient societies, including their status of nutrition and health, and the size and density of their settlements. The general aim of this paper is to present the results of studies in the field of paleopathology, which was conducted on human remains from pre-Hispanic aboriginal settlements located in the Hualfín Valley in the province of Catamarca and in the middle basins of the rivers Dulce and Salado in the province of Santiago del Estero, in northwestern Argentina. The chronological context of these archaeological sites spans between the tenth and sixteenth centuries AD. The skeletal sample includes 110 individuals of both sexes and different categories of age. Ethnohistorical sources reveal the existence in the region of large villages at the moment of contact, with a significant density of population, which is consistent with the data obtained from the archaeological record. The evaluation of diseases, using macroscopic and radiological techniques, reveals in this sample the existence of trauma and inflammatory lesions, joint injuries and metabolic and oral disease. The anomalies evaluated in the present study constitute an important contribution to the history of human pathologies, since they add evidences concerning the presence of ancient diseases in human groups from the mountainous and flat regions in northwestern Argentina during pre-contact times.